



**COLORADO**  
Department of Education

# 2016 Legislative Report Colorado School Counselor Corps Grant Program

Submitted to:

**House Education Committee  
Senate Education Committee  
State Board of Education**

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## Executive Summary

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The School Counselor Corps Grant Program (SCCGP) became part of the Colorado Revised Statute in 2008 (22-91-101 et. seq.) in order to increase the availability of effective school-based counseling within secondary schools. The purpose of SCCGP is to increase the graduation rate within the state and increase the percentage of students who are appropriately prepared for, apply to, and continue into postsecondary education. During the first five years of the grant, grantees received three years of funding. However, a fourth year was added when Cohort 2 was finishing their third year through SB 14-150. This led to an unanticipated fourth year option for Cohort 2, which is captured in this report. Note: Two previous participating districts opted out of the fourth year participation. This report describes SCCGP Cohort 2 grantees and their fourth year of outcomes for the July 1, 2014 to June 30, 2015 reporting period.

### SCCGP Cohort 2

The original SCCGP Cohort 2 consisted of 23 grantees funding a total of 75 secondary schools. Two districts opted out of the unanticipated fourth year funding. The other 21 grantees utilized the additional year of funding to continue efforts and sustain their counseling programs and positions. Sixteen Cohort 2 grantees in Year 4 were districts and five were charter schools spanning diverse regions of the state. Over the course of the 2014-15 year, these 59 schools served 46,758 students grades 7-12, which was approximately 9,500 students less than the prior year. As a result of the two districts that opted out, fifty-nine percent of students at SCCGP funded schools qualified for free or reduced lunch compared to 39 percent statewide. The students served through SCCGP Cohort 2 in Year 4 continued to have highly diverse ethnic backgrounds with 71 percent identifying with an ethnic minority background as compared to 55 percent of students across the state. Additionally, these students experienced a higher rate of mobility, 20 percent, than the state average, 17 percent.

### SCCGP Cohort 2, Year 4 Outcomes and 4 Year Summary

Since the Class of 2010, the statewide on-time graduation rate for Colorado has been increasing with the Class of 2014 reaching and the Class of 2015 maintaining a rate of 77.3 percent. Although these six years have yielded a total increase of five percentage points statewide, the trend over the past two years has begun to flatten. SCCGP Cohort 2 realized a similarly positive trend with greater gains (nearly nine percentage points) over the course of the four years of funding, closing the gap between the state average and SCCGP Cohort 2 from seven percentage points to three percentage points. SCCGP Cohort 2 was able to sustain their impact on graduation rates with this additional year of funding. The comparison group had realized similar improvements up until this last year, which saw a decrease in its graduation rate of 1.2 percentage points.

In 2008-09, prior to SCCGP funding, Cohort 2 schools had an annual dropout rate of 5.5 percentage points. At the end of three years of SCCGP funding, the Cohort 2 schools closed the gap with an average dropout rate, 3.5 percentage points. During 2014-15, the state's dropout rate increased by 0.1 percentage points whereas SCCGP Cohort 2 increased by 0.2 percentage points. Across the board, last year's increases are concerning; however, what is most concerning is that the comparison schools rose a full percentage point to 4.9 percent. SCCGP Cohort 2 schools appear to have mitigated a more severe regression that non-SCCGP schools with similar demographics were unable to thwart.

Over the four years of funding, SCCGP Cohort 2 employed interventions that retained a total of 995 students assuming that the Cohort's dropout rate would have remained the same as in 2010-11 prior to funding. CDE has calculated that each dropout costs \$321,450 per lifetime of that individual, based on estimates of taxes lost and spending via other systems, including welfare, incarceration, and healthcare.<sup>iii</sup> SCCGP Cohort 2 yielded a highly lucrative return on the state's investment, totaling approximately \$319,842,750 or \$20 saved for every \$1 invested.



In this last year, all SCCGP Cohort 2 funded schools participated in concurrent enrollment resulting in a 74 percent change in student participation over the four years.

SCCGP Cohort 2 was able to increase their student FAFSA completion rate by on average 2 percentage points over the four years of funding. SCCGP Cohort 2 schools increased their matriculation rates by approximately 13 percentage points with the first year of funding and were able to maintain that increase over the next two years.

### **SCCGP Cohort 2, Year 4 Grant Implementation**

Overall, grantees made significant progress toward their grant goals. In these cases, grantees are identifying strategies for improvement through the use of data and support that the SCCGP provides, both directly and indirectly. Grantees benefited from direct access to a total of 6,100 hours of postsecondary workforce readiness (PWR) professional development, with more than 875 school professionals accessing an average of 7 hours of training on PWR through SCCGP. Additionally, individual SCCGP school counselors engaged in more than 11 hours of interactive professional development, focused on best practices in identifying achievement gaps and making data-driven decisions. These additional hours were funded directly by the SCCGP.

Pursuant to SB 09-256, all schools are required to have Individual Career and Academic Plans (ICAP) for each student, grades ninth through twelfth. Grantees reported on their progress with this postsecondary workforce readiness strategy noting how the school counselors were instrumental in quality, comprehensive implementation.

SCCGP funding continued to yield reduced student-to-counselor ratios in cohort schools. Beginning with an average ratio of 363:1 prior to funding, this fourth year's ratio was 216:1, which is well below the American School Counselor Association's (ASCA) recommended maximum rate (250:1). Grantees and schools report how critical SCCGP funding is to having the capacity to implement a quality school counseling program.

Overall, SCCGP Cohort 2 schools self-report having a partially implemented school counseling programs with an overall ASCA National Model implementation score of 3.15 (on a four point scale with 4 = fully implemented). Analyzing the individual components, implementing regular needs assessments to guide programming continues to be an area that grantees desire more and focused support. Schools continue to excel at spending at least 80 percent of school counselors' time on activities that directly benefit students; organizing services so that all students are well served and have access to them; and using student performance data to decide how to meet student needs.



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## Introduction

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House Bill 08-1370 established the School Counselor Corps Grant Program. The resulting legislation enacted by the General Assembly is 22-91-101 et. seq., of the Colorado Revised Statutes (C.R.S.). The State Board of Education promulgated rules for program implementation, including: the timeline for submitting applications to the Department, the form of the grant application, criteria for awarding grants, and any information to be included in the Department's program report. Effective September 30, 2008, the statute can be found at 22-91-101 et. seq. (C.R.S.).

### Purpose of the Program

The purpose of the School Counselor Corps Grant Program (SCCGP) is to increase the availability of effective school-based counseling within secondary schools with a focus on postsecondary preparation. SCCGP was created to increase the graduation rate and increase the percentage of students who appropriately prepare for, apply to, and continue into postsecondary education. The role of school counselors has undergone revisions and changes, and today the emphasis is on college and career readiness and ensuring students are prepared for the next steps. Among the reasons for this shift is that a high percentage of students either are not graduating on-time (within four years of entering ninth grade) or not graduating.<sup>iii</sup> Timely monitoring, evaluating, and intervening are necessary measures to decrease the number of students who dropout and increase the number of students who graduate.<sup>iv</sup> SCCGP supports school counselors in implementing these types of activities.

### Role of the School Counselor Corps Advisory Board

The School Counselor Corps Advisory Board assists the Department in providing ongoing support to the funded sites in the form of professional development, mentoring, site visits, and technical assistance. See Attachment A for a listing of School Counselor Corps Advisory Board members.

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## Description of Program for Reporting Period July 1, 2014 – June 30, 2015

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### Grant Application Process

The Request for Proposal (RFP) was announced in the spring of 2011 prior to the State Legislature making final appropriations to the program in order for eligible education providers to have time to prepare application to the program. This allowed the funds to be maximized by beginning implementation at the start of the new school year. The available funding for the launch of the second SCCGP cohort in the 2011-2012 school year was \$4,800,000, \$4,320,000 for 2012-13, and \$3,928,650 for 2013-14. The SCCGP design reduces funding by 10 percent annually over the course of three years in order to encourage grantees to systematize and sustain programming beyond the grant program. SCCGP Cohort 2 was designed as a three-year grant cycle. However, SCCGP grantees were given the opportunity to request an additional year of funding per SB14-150. Requests required grantees to provide a plan for the fourth year and a narrative on what had been accomplished thus far and what additional outcomes could be realized through a fourth year of funding. \$2,958,240 was awarded to Cohort 2 grantees in 2014-15. This report includes data from the 21 of the original 23 grantees that participated in that fourth year of funding.

SCCGP defined an eligible education provider as:

- A school district (on behalf of one or more secondary schools);
- A Board of Cooperative Services (BOCES);
- A charter school; or
- An Institute Charter School.



Priority was given to applicants that serve:

- Secondary schools at which the dropout rate exceeds the statewide average; and/or
- Secondary schools with a percentage of students who are eligible for Free or Reduced Lunch exceeding the statewide average.

Allowable activities included secondary school counselor salaries and benefits; postsecondary preparatory programs; and professional development. The RFP included a rubric that detailed criteria that a proposal would be measured against and included sections on 1) a quality plan, 2) partnerships, 3) postsecondary activities, and 4) a budget narrative.

### Description of Grantees

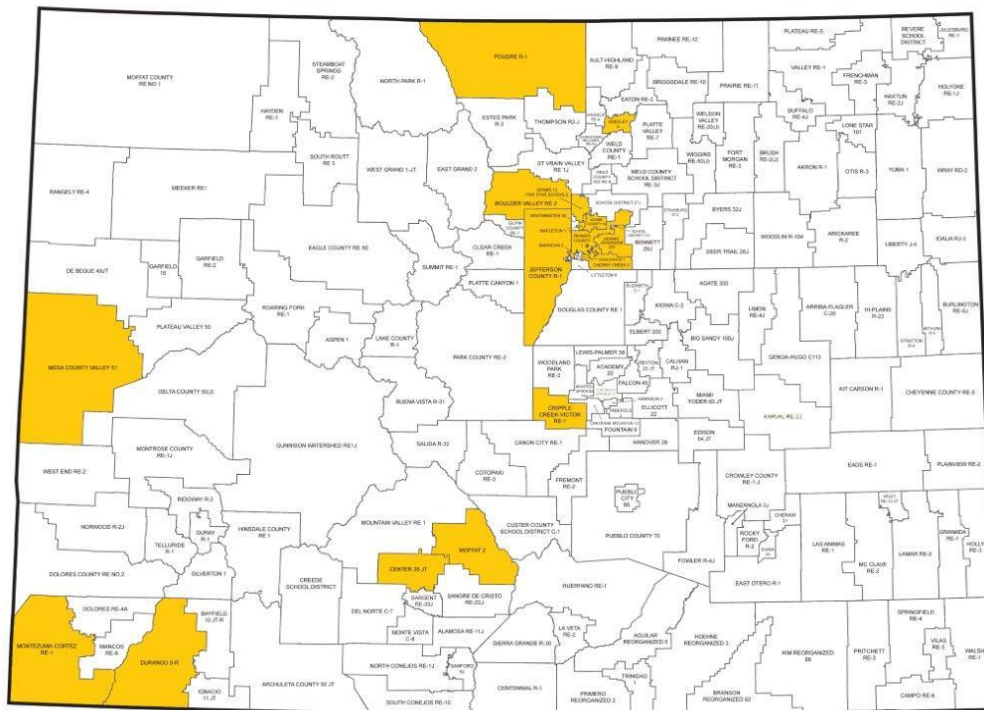
SCCGP Cohort 2 originally consisted of 23 grantees funding 75 schools. Two districts undergoing significant change opted out of fourth year funding. One was a large school district the other grantee was an extremely small district that was undergoing a leadership change. The remaining sixteen district and five charter schools grantees utilized the partial funding to further sustain their counseling programs and positions within 59 schools. Every year the cohort has changed a bit due to school closures or redesign. Even with this fourth year's reduction in school participation, SCCGP Cohort 2 grantees continue to represent a wide range of schools serving a diverse student population with regard to secondary school type, student count, mobility rates, geographic region, ethnicity, and free and/or reduced lunch qualified students as described in the following sections.

**Type of Secondary School:** Thirty of the 59 SCCGP funded schools are high schools. An additional nine serve both middle and high school grade levels. The remaining 20 are middle schools. Table 1, on page 9, outlines the grantees and the secondary grade levels served by the schools funded.<sup>v</sup> Ten of these schools are designated Alternative Education Campuses (AEC).

**Geographic Location:** As depicted in the map below, SCCGP Cohort 2 grantees are located across Colorado.

MAP 1: SCCGP Cohort 2 Grantees' Location

Colorado School District Map

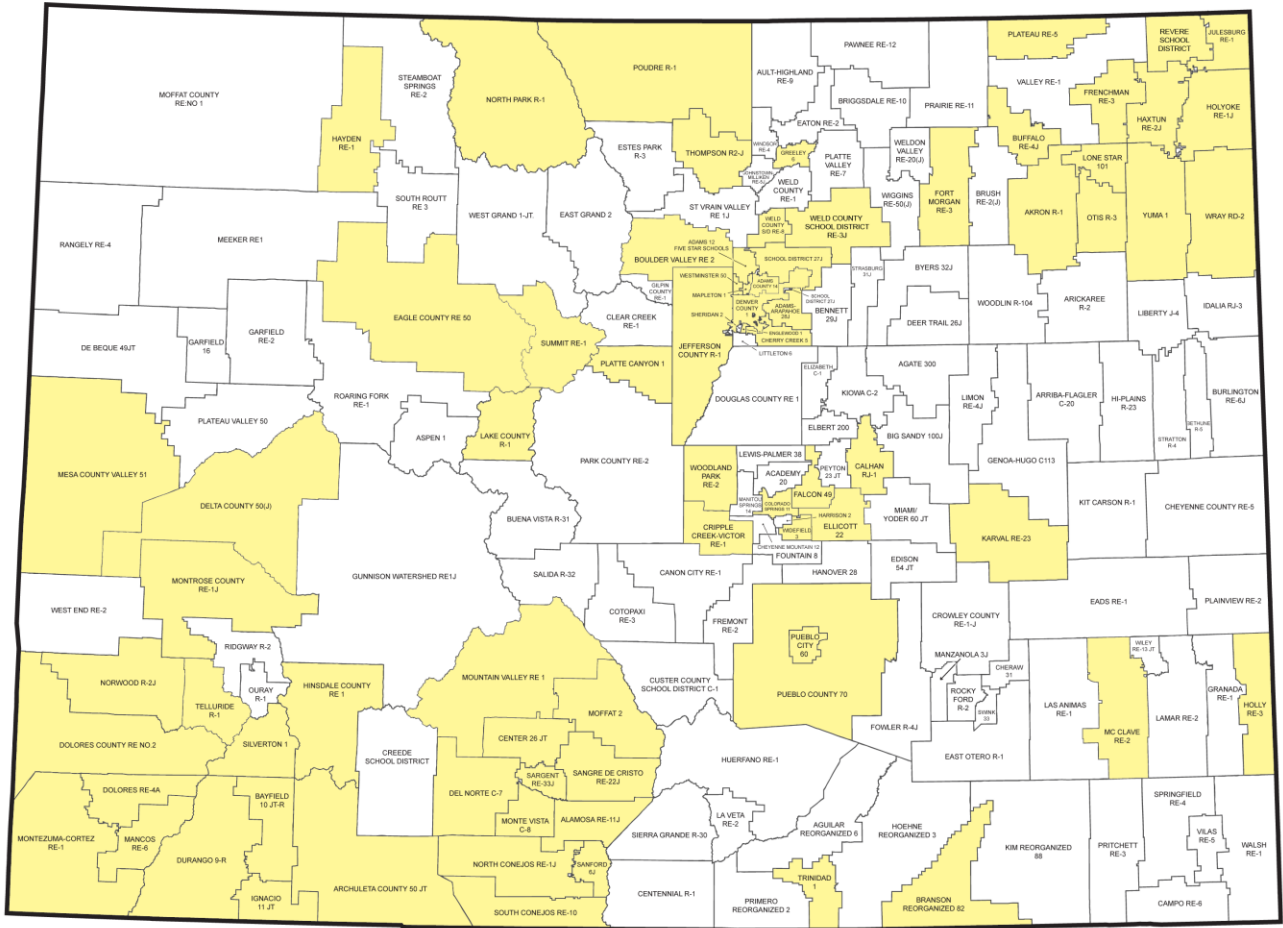


Charter School Institute Schools not shown

- Animas High School in Durango, CO
- Colorado Springs Early College in Colorado Springs, CO
- High Point Academy in Aurora, CO



MAP 2: SCCGP Participating Districts from 2008-2016  
School Counselor Corps Grant Map



Produced by the Colorado Department of Education Web Management Team - August 2014





TABLE 1: SCCGP Cohort 2 Grantees and Types of Schools Funded in Year 4

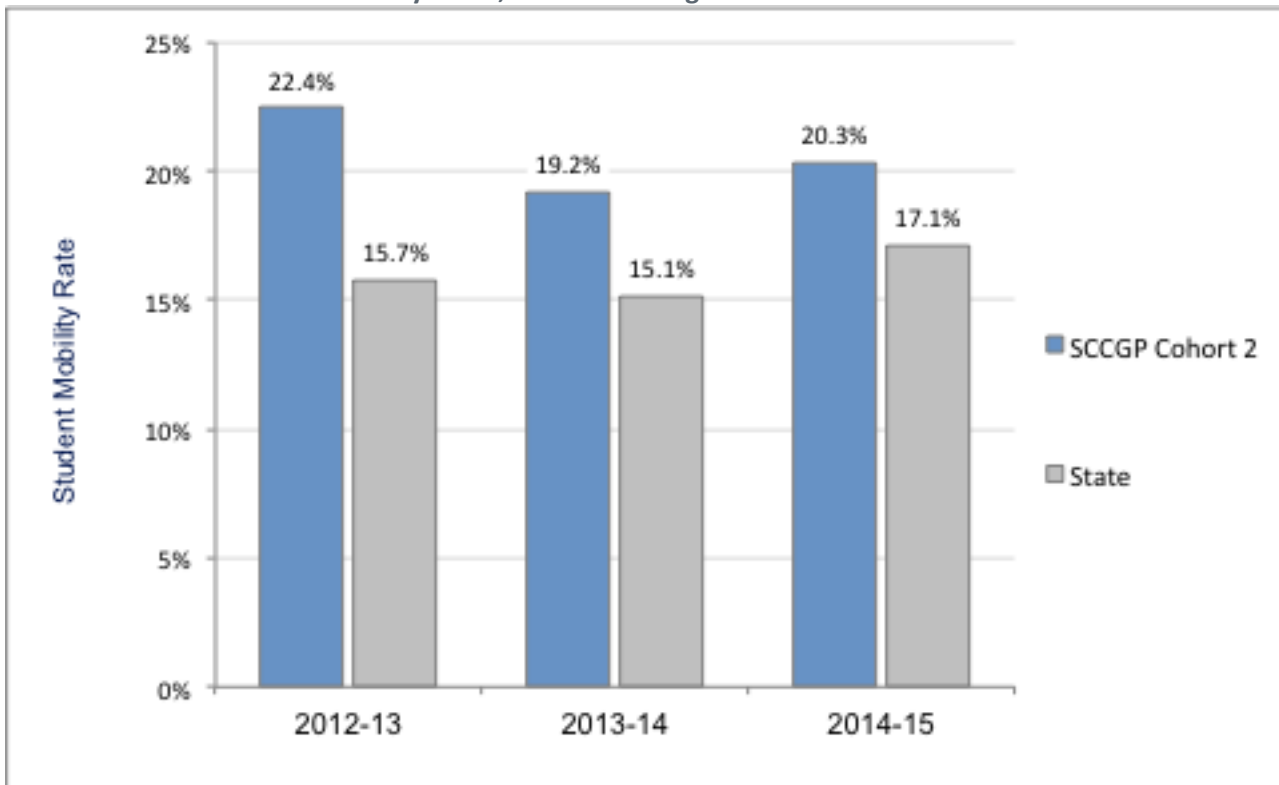
	High	Middle	Undivided Middle & High	Total
<u>Districts</u>				
Adams 12 Five Star Schools	3	0	0	3
Adams County 14	2	2	0	4
Adams-Arapahoe 28J	0	7	0	7
Boulder Valley RE 2	2	0	0	2
Center 26 JT	2	1	0	3
Cherry Creek 5	1	3	0	4
Cripple Creek-Victor RE 1	0	0	1	1
Denver County 1	4	3	3	10
Greeley 6	3	0	0	3
Harrison 2	2	0	0	2
Jefferson County R-1	4	0	0	4
Mapleton 1	1	0	1	2
Mesa County Valley 51	3	0	0	3
Moffat 2	0	0	1	1
Montezuma-Cortez Re-1	1	0	0	1
Poudre R-1	0	3	1	4
<u>Charter Schools</u>				
Ace Community Challenge School	0	0	1	1
Animas High School	1	0	0	1
Atlas Preparatory School	0	1	0	1
Colorado Springs Early Colleges	1	0	0	1
High Point Academy	0	0	1	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>59</b>



**Student Count and End of Year Pupil Membership:** At the time of the official student count in October of 2014, the 59 SCCGP Cohort 2 schools had 37,507 students enrolled in grades 7-12. With the reduction in grantees for this continuation year, approximately 7,000 less students were served than in previous years. Over the course of the 2014-15 year, SCCGP Cohort 2 schools served 46,758 students grades 7-12, which was approximately 9,500 students less than the prior year. This is the result of two school districts opting out of Year 4 funding. CDE staff does not anticipate this happening in future cohorts as grantees will plan for a fourth year from beginning of the grant. (Note: The majority of data described throughout the report utilizes End of Year pupil membership, because it takes into consideration the students who are mobile during the course of the year and, therefore, provides a more accurate base count.)

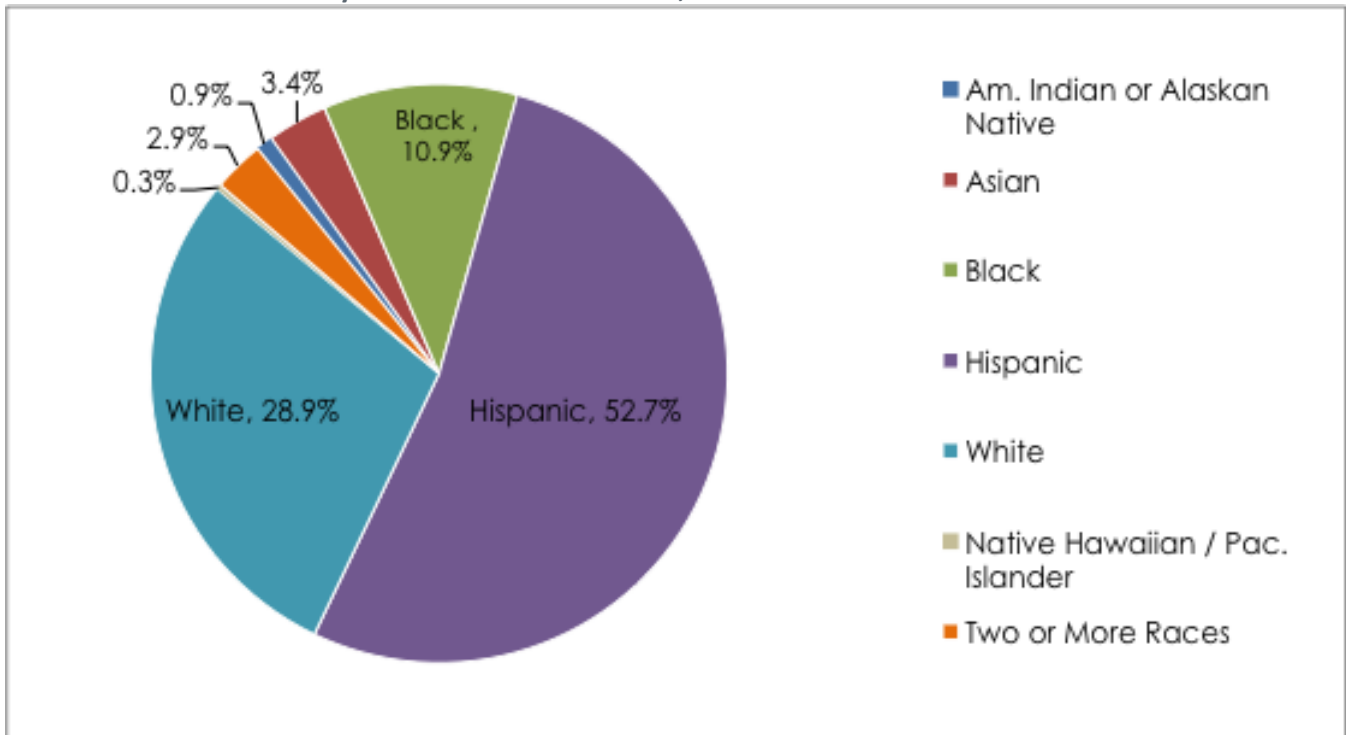
**Mobility:** CDE defines student mobility rates as the unduplicated count of grade K-12 students who moved into or out of the school or district in a given year divided by the total number of students that were part of the same membership base at any time during the same year. In 2012-13, the calculation was changed to exclude students who changed districts during the summer, whereas in prior years only students who just changed schools within the same district were excluded. The following chart illustrates 2012-13 through 2014-15 mobility rates for SCCGP Cohort 2 as compared to the state for grades 7-12. This comparison illustrates the high rates of mobile students SCCGP Cohort 2 serves (20%) compared to the state (17%) and also suggests that SCCGP Cohort 2 schools are closing the gap in retaining students, which could be in part due to connections built through this grant program.

**CHART 1: SCCGP Cohort 2 Mobility Rates, 2012-13 through 2014-15**



**Ethnicity:** The students served through SCCGP Cohort 2 have highly diverse ethnic backgrounds. Seventy-one percent of SCCGP Cohort 2 students identify with an ethnic minority background as compared to 55 percent of students across the state. The following chart depicts the breakdown of students’ ethnicities in SCCGP funded schools for 2013-14. As with the rest of the state, SCCGP Cohort 2 schools’ ethnic diversity increased.

**CHART 2: Students’ Ethnicity in SCCGP Cohort 2 Schools, 2014-15**



**Free or Reduced Lunch:** The number of students qualifying for free or reduced lunch is the standard proxy for students’ socioeconomic status and, as such, one of SCCGP’s eligibility requirements is that the schools serve a high percent of students qualifying for free and reduced lunch. With districts reporting to CDE, SCCGP Cohort 2 schools served student populations with 59 percent qualifying for free and reduced lunch whereas the state served a student population of 38 percent who qualify; therefore, SCCGP Cohort 2 continues to successfully serve students who are economically disadvantaged.

**TABLE 2: SCCGP Cohort 2 Percentage of Students Grades 7-12 Qualifying for Free or Reduced Lunch, 2014-15 (End of Year Pupil Membership Count)**

	Students Grade 7-12 Qualifying for Free or Reduced Lunch	Students Grades 7-12	Students Qualifying for Free or Reduced Lunch
SCCGP Cohort 2	27,514	46,758	58.8%
State	165,827	440,843	37.6%



## Data Collection & Analysis

A variety of data sources were utilized for this report. Wherever possible, third-party validated data sources were used as a primary source, such as the National Student Clearinghouse or U.S. Department of Education, as these data have been verified as accurate by a third party entity. When these data were unavailable, state-collected data were utilized. Additionally, grantees and schools submitted a year-end annual report during the spring semester to illuminate program implementation for year three. In addition to examining trends and state comparisons where possible, a quasi-experimental design was utilized with a comparison group comprising schools that are similar to SCCGP Cohort 2 funded schools. (For more analysis details, See Attachment B.)

### Comparison Group

As indicated by demographic data outlined in the previous section, SCCGP schools are a unique subset within the state. Therefore, a comparison group of schools was pulled from the list of schools that were eligible for funding based on their 2008-09 dropout rate or percentage of students qualifying for free or reduced lunch. (Comparing the cohort schools to all schools shows useful data but does not compare these schools to similar schools in terms of demographics or history of outcomes.) Schools that were funded by SCCGP in Cohort 1 were excluded, which limited the number of large high schools available for comparison. Schools were selected based upon 2008-09 data on their dropout rate, percentage of students qualifying for free or reduced lunch, grade levels served, student body size, and school type (e.g. Alternative Education Campus designation, charter). A number of schools have closed or reconfigured since their eligibility was determined in 2008-09 and, therefore, were eliminated from the final comparison group. The following table describes the composition of SCCGP Cohort 2, its comparison group, and the state on key variables from 2008-09 when eligibility was determined.

**TABLE 3: SCCGP Cohort 2 and Comparison Group Grades 7-12 Composition, 2008-09\***

	SCCGP Cohort 2	Comparison Group	State Totals
<b>Total Number of Schools</b>	76	63	725
<b>Total Pupil Count (EOY Membership)</b>	62,012	43,015	416,953
<b>Grades 9-12 Pupil Count</b>	45,165	32,780	282,657
<b>Grades 7-8 Pupil Count</b>	16,847	10,235	134,296
<b>Students in grades 9-12</b>	73%	76%	68%
<b>Students in grades 7-8</b>	27%	24%	32%
<b>Students in AEC schools**</b>	4.1%	3.5%	4.7%
<b>Students Econ. Disadvantaged</b>	47.1%	55.3%	29.8%
<b>9th-12th Grade Dropout Rate</b>	5.5%	5.3%	5%
<b>7th-8th Grade Dropout Rate</b>	1.2%	1%	0.7%

\*Baseline data prior to grant funding

\*\*AEC designation is an estimate as schools designations are non-permanent.

This comparison group is utilized throughout the report when analyzing third-party validated and state-collected data. Significant changes to the comparison group include: at the end of 2012-13, Fairview K-8 closed; and at the end of 2013-14, Montbello High School, Centennial and Miami-Yoder Junior High Schools, and Smiley Middle School closed in addition to Community Leadership Academy eliminating its secondary grade levels. Thus, for this report, the comparison group is comprised of 57 schools serving 36,408 students. Despite these closures, analyses of key school and student demographics remain comparable.



## SCCGP Cohort 2, Year 4 Outcomes

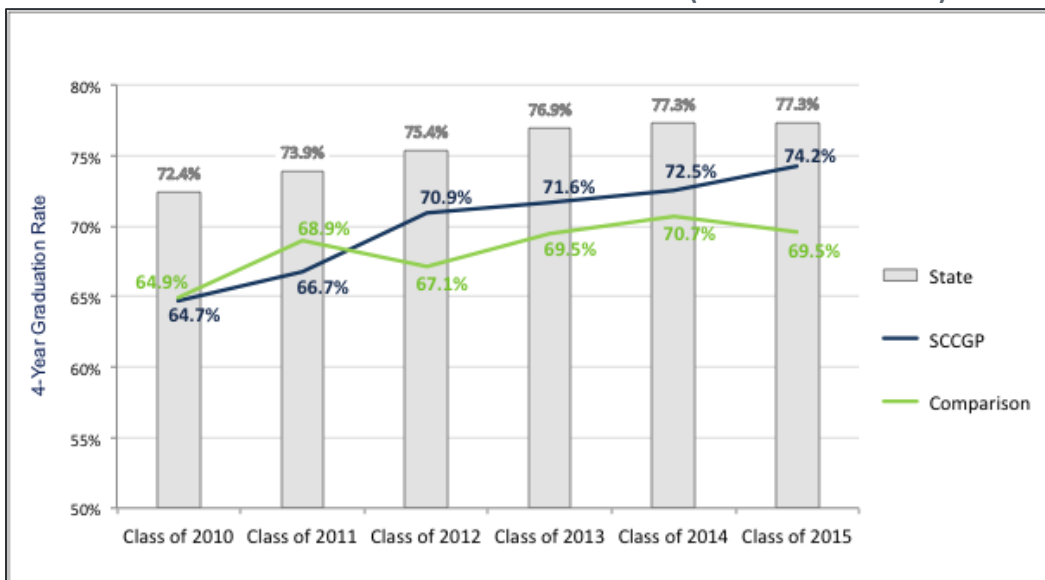
Early this year, the State Board of Education and Colorado Commission of Higher Education redefined Postsecondary Workforce Readiness (PWR) as “Colorado high school graduates demonstrate the knowledge and skills (competencies) needed to succeed in postsecondary settings and to advance in career pathways as lifelong learners and contributing citizens.” Districts operationalize PWR in a variety of ways, including students having the required life skills for success after high school, GPAs, on-track to on-time graduation, having work experience and/or college credit. This report highlights third-year outcomes and baseline data for the following indicators:

- Graduation rate
- Dropout rate
- Attendance rate
- Concurrent enrollment participation
- Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) completion
- Postsecondary matriculation

### Graduation Rates

SCCGP aims to increase grantees’ on-time graduation rate. This analysis begins with the Class of 2010 when Colorado adopted the four-year graduation rate. The revised formula defines “on time” as only those students who graduate from high school four years after transitioning from eighth grade. For the subsequent three years after the revised graduation definition was in place, the rate for Colorado increased 1.5 percentage points annually. The past two years yielded a significant slowing of that progress with the Class of 2014 increasing 0.4 percentage points and the Class of 2015 remaining at that statewide rate of 77.3 percent. Over the past five years, SCCGP Cohort 2 realized a similarly positive trend with a more profound rate of improvement than the state average; and, in this past year, the SCCGP Cohort 2 trailed the state by merely three percentage points as compared to the seven percentage point gap prior to funding. The comparison group’s trend shows that the closing of this gap cannot be merely attributed to a ceiling for the state graduation rate. The comparison group had been following the trends of the state and SCCGP Cohort 2 at slightly less significant rates; however, this last year, the comparison group’s graduation rate fell 1.2 percentage points. These differences in trends illustrated in the chart below indicate that the SCCGP strategies are effective in increasing and maintaining those improved graduation rates.

**CHART 3: On-time Graduation Rates for SCCGP Cohort 2 (Classes 2010 – 2015)**



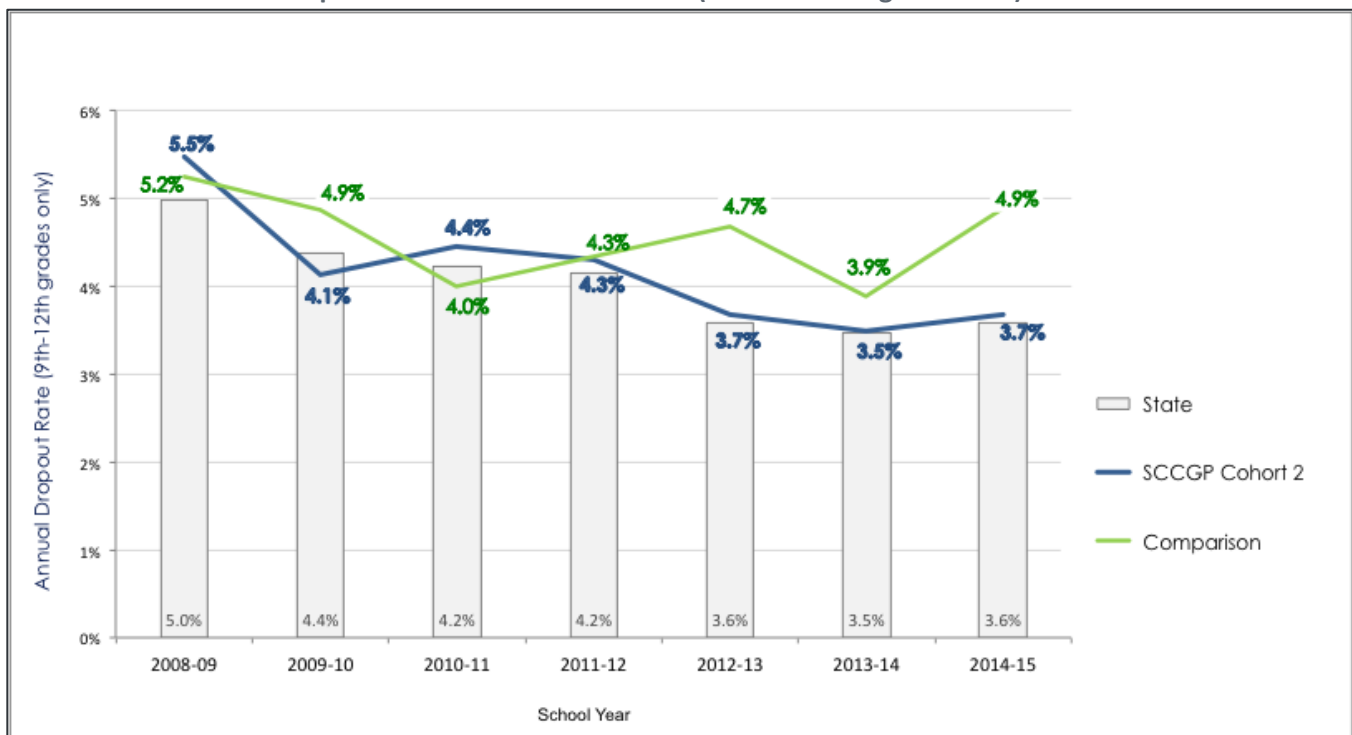
*Note: SCCGP funds began the 2011-12 academic year.*



### Dropout Rates

Dropout rate analysis begins with the 2008-09 school year as these data were part of the eligibility criteria. Over the seven school years within this analysis, the statewide dropout rate improved, or declined, from 5 percent to 3.7 percent for grades 9-12 with this last year seeing a 0.1 increase. In 2008-09, SCCGP Cohort 2 schools had a 5.5 percent dropout rate. After three years of funding, SCCGP Cohort 2 achieved the same dropout rate as the state, 3.5 percent, and this past year rose 0.2 percentage points. Although this increase is concerning for SCCGP Cohort 2 and the state, the comparison group’s rate increased a full percentage point this last year. This discrepancy indicates that the SCCGP strategies mitigated the negative impacts that the state faced with regard to the broader dropout trends, thus sustaining the impacts from previous years of SCCGP funding.

CHART 4: Grades 9-12 Dropout Rates for SCCGP Cohort 2 (2008-09 through 2013-14)

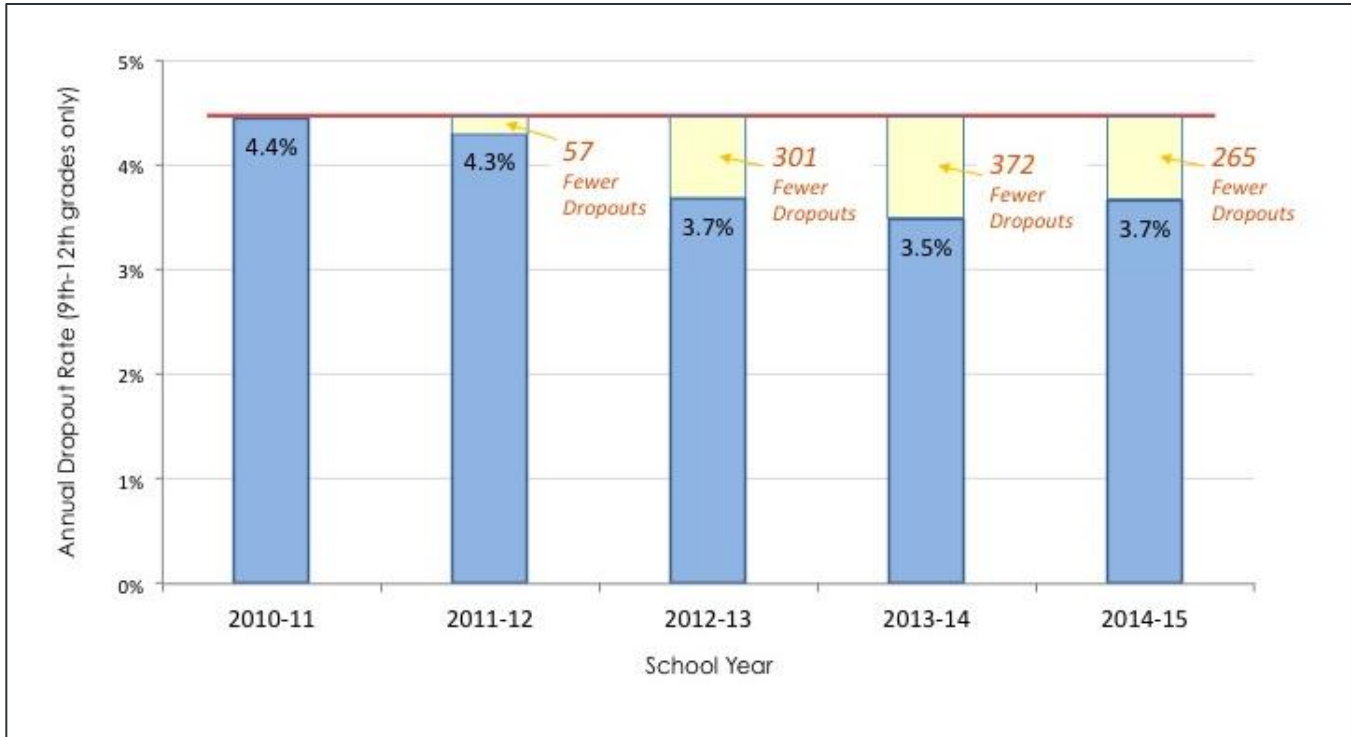


Note: SCCGP funds began the 2011-12 academic year.

Over the four years of funding, SCCGP Cohort 2 employed interventions that retained a total of 995 students assuming that the Cohort’s dropout rate would have remained the same as in 2010-11 prior to funding. CDE has calculated that each dropout costs \$321,450 per lifetime of that individual, based on estimates of taxes lost and spending via other systems, including welfare, incarceration, and healthcare.<sup>viii</sup> The following chart suggests SCCGP Cohort 2 yielded a highly lucrative return on the state’s investment, totaling approximately \$319,842,750 or \$20 saved for every \$1 invested.



**CHART 5: SCCGP Cohort 2 Dropouts Retained Over the Four Years of Funding**



Note: SCCGP funds began the 2011-12 academic year.

### Attendance Rates

Graduation rates do not apply to middle schools and dropout rates at the middle school level are below one percent making meaningful change difficult to observe. Therefore, attendance rates are utilized as an additional indicator or proxy for school connectedness and future completion at the middle school level. All groups followed a similar trend in attendance in the past few years; however, in this last year, the comparison group’s attendance rate decreased more significantly than the state’s or SCCGP Cohort 2’s rate. Again, it appears that SCCGP strategies, including those at the middle school level, are mitigating negative impacts experienced by students and schools across the state and sustaining the previously realized positive impacts of SCCGP.

**TABLE 4: Aggregated Attendance Rates for SCCGP Cohort 2, Middle Schools (2009-10 through 2014-15)**

	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
SCCGP Cohort 2	92.3%	93.1%	94.0%	92.8%	92.9%	92.4%
Comparison	92.7%	92.7%	93.5%	92.4%	92.4%	91.5%
State	93.3%	94.0%	94.7%	93.9%	93.9%	93.4%

Note: SCCGP funds began the 2011-12 academic year.



## Concurrent Enrollment

The Colorado Department of Higher Education in partnership with the Colorado Department of Education authors an annual report on dual or concurrent enrollment, which provides high school students the opportunity to enroll in college courses.<sup>viii</sup> “Concurrent Enrollment” is the “simultaneous enrollment of a qualified student in a local education provider and in one or more postsecondary courses, which may include an academic or career and technical education course, at an institution of higher education” as detailed in 22-35-103 C.R.S. The report, which began in 2012, presents the districts, high schools, and number of unique students engaging in Concurrent Enrollment, ASCENT, and remedial courses as reported by the institutions of higher education. In 2011-12, Colorado higher education institutions worked with 304 high schools to serve 14,016 students across Colorado. In 2012-13, the program expanded to include 365 high schools serving 18,231 students; and in 2013-14, the program saw gains to 382 schools serving 19,306 students. This growth is substantial; however, SCCGP Cohort 2 increased participation at significantly higher rates than the state. 100% of SCCGP high schools participated in Concurrent Enrollment.

Impact is most observable when examining the changes in participation over the course of the grant. With the slightly smaller cohort this last year, all SCCGP funded schools participated in concurrent enrollment increasing the percent change of schools participating. In this last year, the state experienced a significant increase in student participation, a 71 percent change, which is similar though still a little less than the 74 percent change SCCGP Cohort 2 realized. Despite the state’s overall gains, the comparison group continued to lag in its rate of change. The following two tables depict these impacts.

**Table 4: SCCGP Cohort 2 Schools Participating in Concurrent Enrollment (2011-12 through 2014-15)**

	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	Percent Change
SCCGP Cohort 2	24	35	39	39	62.5%
Comparison	24	34	31	31	29%
State	304	365	382	408	34%

**Table 5: SCCGP Cohort 2 Schools’ Students Participating in Concurrent Enrollment (2011-12 through 2014-15)**

	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	Percent Change
SCCGP Cohort 2	1,000	1,531	1,742	1,741	74%
Comparison	1,694	2,258	2,502	2,502	48%
State	14,016	18,231	19,306	24,010	71%

## Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)

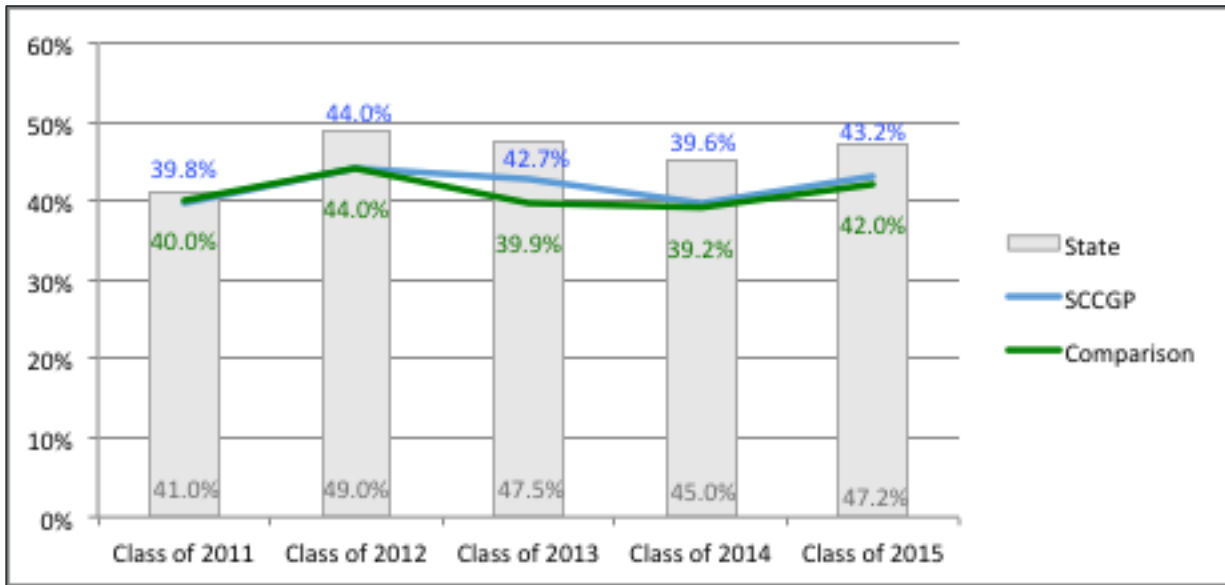
Nationally, research suggests that 90 percent of high school graduates who complete the FAFSA during their senior year of high school enroll in college within 12 months.<sup>ix</sup> Thus, a best practice for school counselors is to support students in completing this PWR benchmark. The Colorado Department of Higher Education recently began collecting, validating, and reporting school-level data on seniors completing FAFSAs (see <https://fafsa.highered.colorado.gov>). Note that FAFSA labels these data in terms of the college freshman class. The following analysis will maintain the referencing used throughout this report with the year reflecting the high school class; therefore, the FAFSA 2012-13 data is applicable to the graduating class of 2012 and referenced here as 2011-12 from the perspective of SCCGP grantees.

Prior to funding in 2011, SCCGP Cohort 2 and comparison schools were one percentage point below the state’s rate for FAFSA completion. After the first year of funding, SCCGP funded schools increased their rates as did the state and comparison group. However, after two years of falling rates across all groups, this last year of funding enabled SCCGP Cohort 2 to regain more of those original gains from that first year.





Chart 7: SCCGP Cohort 2, High School Seniors' FAFSA Completion Rates (2010-11 through 2014-15)

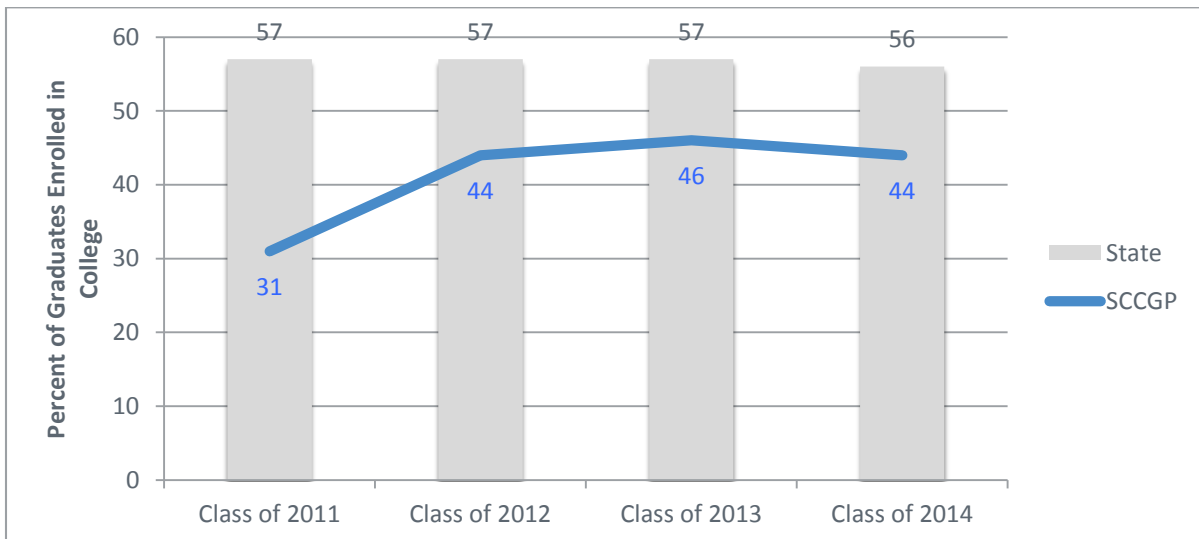


Note: SCCGP funds began the 2011-12 academic year.

### Postsecondary Matriculation

Enrollment data for the Class of 2015 was not available for this report. Therefore, the following analysis contains data for Class of 2011 as baseline and Class of 2012, 2013, and 2014 for three years of SCCGP Cohort 2 outcomes. The state's rate of 57% remained constant dipping only slightly to 56% for the Class of 2014. SCCGP Cohort 2 schools increased their matriculation rates by approximately 13 percentage points with the first year of funding and were able to maintain that increase over the next two years. The following chart illustrates these trends.

CHART 8: SCCGP Cohort 2 Year Three Matriculation Outcomes, 2010-11 to 2013-14





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## SCCGP Cohort 2, Year 4 Grant Implementation

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A refined reporting system was initiated in 2012-13 and revised in 2013-14 to assess grantee and schools' grant goals, professional development, ICAP implementation, student-to-counselor ratios, ASCA National Model implementation, student participation in career and technical education as well as college visits. Sixteen grantees submitted district-level grant reports. Of the 59 schools that were identified by grantees as part of their application, 51 schools submitted a school-level grant report. The following analysis provides an assessment of program implementation and areas for program improvement.

### Grantee Progress toward Reaching Their Goals

Grantees identify their own goals. For twenty-four percent of their goals, grantees reported exceeding their performance measures. The goals that grantees reported success with most commonly included ICAP completion, getting/staying on track for graduation, increased number of college applications submitted, and improved GPA. Many grantees attributed their success to having data systems, PWR benchmarks, and required courses and curriculum in place to identify and track students' progress early and often. Collaboration across schools for transition success and with families and community partners was also noted as particularly helpful. Grantees also shared that the building and maintenance these systems and relationships is largely dependent on having the funds to support a school counselor.

In this last year, 92 percent of self-identified goals were met. Each of the unmet self-identified goals were unique to the grantee, though their explanations for not meeting their goals included not having sufficient funding to staff counselors to meet all of their students' needs or to fully train staff for quality program implementation and not having a system in place for internships and job shadow placements. Grantees that did not reach their desired impact shared their plans for program improvement, such as establishing a system for internships and job shadow placements through class requirements, for example.

### Professional Development

School Counselor Corps Grant recipients indicated that secondary school counselors and team members attended 6,100 hours of postsecondary workforce readiness professional development, reaching more than 875 school professionals with almost 7 hours of professional development on average. The number of professional development hours grantees accessed in this fourth year returned to the level of professional development grantees' accessed in the first two years of the grant program. The School Counselor Corps Program provided approximately 300 hours of professional development, which is less than prior years because of the smaller number of Cohort 2 grantees and schools funded. However, on average, each counselor received more than 11 hours of grant-specific professional development, which was more than the prior year. The following list provides examples of types of additional professional development opportunities the grantees were able to access:

- American/Colorado School Counselor Association Conference(s);
- ACT workshop/conference;
- Colorado Council on High School and College Relations Annual Conference;
- Colorado Statewide Pre-Collegiate Conference; and
- Curriculum/program specific trainings (ex. ASIST, PREPaRE, Early Warning Systems).

Grantees shared the value of these professional development opportunities on their work. Of particular note are all the examples of how grantees brought the information back to their staff. The following quotations illustrate the impact that these trainings had on district and school practices:



*The information presented during this training that pertained to needs assessments and environmental scan will be utilized in our data collection process. Needs assessments will help us identify what problems or needs exist. The environmental scan will assist us in identifying programs and services that exist to meet the needs and help us to define the gaps. The environmental scan will have a wider scope and serve as an integral component of the planning process.*

*Counselors from the 5 middle schools were able to populate the early warning system and develop group, individualized, and consultative support.*

*We have been able to use information from CDE's website to guide our programming. We learned about the updated ICAP and would like to use the appraisal tool to assess our program. We revamped RTI referral process.*

*Counselors shared new information with their departments and used the information directly with students. As postsecondary institutions are dynamic forces, it is important that counselors have the most up-to-date information to share with students and their families.*

### **Individual Career and Academic Plans (ICAP) Implementation**

ICAP is a multi-year process that intentionally guides students and families in the exploration of career, academic and postsecondary opportunities. With the support of adults, students develop the awareness, knowledge, attitudes and skills to create their own meaningful and PoWeRful pathways to be career and college ready. The ICAP is used to help establish personalized academic and career goals, explore postsecondary career and educational opportunities, align coursework and curriculum, apply to postsecondary institutions, secure financial aid, and ultimately enter the workforce following college graduation. The State Board of Education promulgated rules for ICAPs pursuant to SB 09-256:

*Effective September 30, 2011, each school counselor or school administrator shall ensure that every student in grades nine through twelve and their parents or legal guardians has access to and assistance in the development of an ICAP (1 CCR 301-81, 2.02 (1)(d)).*

Grantees' increasingly detailed comments illustrate how the grant supported them in meeting this requirement with high quality, systemic changes:

*[School] completes ICAPs for each student through individual student and family meetings and through incorporation of guidance lessons during class (aligned). The goal is to assist a student and his or her parent/legal guardian in 1) developing a meaningful plan of educational study; 2) exploring the postsecondary career and educational opportunities available to the student; 3) aligning course work and curriculum; 4) applying to postsecondary education institutions; 5) securing financial aid; and 6) entering the workforce. The lessons taught are compiled in a student's individual file and travel with the student so that his/her next school counselor will have an idea of the student's goals and academic plan. ICAPs help connect the academic curriculum to the students' future career goals and aspirations.*

*At the middle level, counselors regularly access students through full class activities using College in Colorado and provide goal setting, high school and postsecondary academic planning, and postsecondary college and career planning activities to their student. High school counselors provide ICAP lessons two to three times per year per grade level using Naviance for academic and postsecondary planning and for goal setting activities. The Director of Counseling Services and Student Engagement has*



*met with all curriculum directors in an effort to have ICAP requirements embedded with the curriculum in different curricular areas.*

*ICAP implementation is comprehensive and includes completing established ICAP milestones, college visits, career fairs, and passing a require class called Senior Seminar. ICAP milestones/activities are done in advisory groups facilitated by school staff and planned by the Corps counselor on half-days set up in the school calendar. The school counselors in consultation with an advisory group made up of school staff, parents, and students, develop the ICAP Day lesson plans and then train school staff. Students do a student-led conference with their parent and advisor to review their ICAP during February parent-teacher conference. In addition, students meet with counselors, the RTI coordinator, and administrators to monitor their progress toward established goals [and] ensure they are on track for graduation.*

### Student-to-Counselor Ratio

The grant played a significant role in reducing the student-to-counselor ratio in funded schools to meet the American School Counselor Association’s (ASCA) recommendation of 250:1. ASCA recommends this ratio so that professional school counselors can focus their skills, time, and energy on direct and indirect services to students at least 80 percent of their time. This comprehensive school counseling program model:

- ensures equitable access to a rigorous education for all students;
- identifies the knowledge and skills all students will acquire as a result of the K-12 comprehensive school counseling program;
- is delivered to all students in a systematic fashion;
- is based on current data to make decision; and
- is provided by a state-credentialed, licensed professional school counselor.

Benefits of lower student-to-counselor ratios and implementing the comprehensive counseling program include higher standardized test scores, higher graduation rates, and higher retention rates.<sup>x</sup>

Out of the 59 funded schools for 2014-15, 47 reported their student-to-counselor ratios for this funding cycle. SCCGP funding sustained a reduced student-to-counselor ratio by on average at least 100 students per counselor per year. Prior to SCCGP funding, the schools’ average ratio was 363:1; then the first year of funding reduced the average ratio to 261:1, and then 232:1 in the second year and 229:1 in the third, both of which were under ASCA’s recommended maximum ratio. This fourth year continued to reduce the average ratio to 216:1. Similar to the trends observed in the third year, the high school ratio continued to drop to 167:1 while the middle school ratio continued to rise to 310:1. Correcting the increase in the undivided middle and high schools’ ratio from last year, this fourth year saw a substantial reduction to record low numbers for this cohort over all four years at 146:1. These trends further support that grantees prioritize high schools with their SCCGP staffing resources. The following table illustrates the significant reduction in school counselor caseloads that SCCGP afforded funded schools.

**Table 6: Student-to-Counselor Ratios Prior to and During the Four Years of SCCGP Cohort 2 Funding**

	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
High Schools	311:1	239:1	239:1	189:1	167:1
Middle Schools	438:1	303:1	237:1	282:1	310:1
Undivided Middle & High Schools	344:1	183:1	182:1	216:1	146:1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>363:1</b>	<b>261:1</b>	<b>232:1</b>	<b>229:1</b>	<b>216:1</b>

*Note: SCCGP funds began the 2011-12 academic year.*



Throughout the grant reports, grantees noted that improved student-to-counselor ratios afforded schools additional opportunities to develop systems and supports that enable them to provide more comprehensive, quality, and/or individualized postsecondary readiness support services.

### American School Counselors Association (ASCA) National Model Implementation

The school-level grant report included a reliable measure for assessing the level of ASCA National Model implementation, the School Counseling Program Implementation Survey.<sup>xi</sup> This is the third year this tool has been utilized to measure implementation of the ASCA model by grantees. The survey includes a total of 14 items, which provide an overall implementation score and two factor scores – programmatic orientation and school counseling services. The following table includes the two years of survey data for SCCGP Cohort 2. (Note: the four point rating scale for the survey was 1 = Not Present, 2 = Development in Progress, 3 = Partly Implemented, and 4 = Fully Implemented.)

Table 7: ASCA National Model Implementation Scores for SCCGP Cohort 2, Years 2-4

	Overall Implementation	Programmatic Orientation	School Counseling Services
2012-13 (Baseline)	3.1	3	3.2
2013-14	3.1	3.1	3.3
2014-15	3.1	3	3.3

Overall, SCCGP Cohort 2 schools’ ASCA Implementation Scores stayed steady. School leaders continue to report “partially implemented” school counseling programs with an overall implementation score of 3.1. This plateau may reflect the scale’s limitation in capturing small change. Examination of individual items indicate that schools continue to struggle the most with implementing regular needs assessments to guide programming. Grantees are most adept at spending at least 80 percent of their school counselors’ time on activities that directly benefit students, using student performance data to decide how to meet student needs, and organizing services so that all students are well served and have access to them.

### Career and Technical Education

As grant reporting methods continue to be refined, this data point changed slightly from the year prior. In 2012-13 grantees reported duplicated counts of students enrolled in multiple career and technical education (CTE) courses. This past two years, grantees were asked to report an unduplicated count. Although little change occurred with the data definition changing, this past year saw significant reduction, which likely is due to better data collection that aligns with the new definition. In 2012-13 and 2013-14, SCCGP Cohort 2 schools enrolled approximately 15,350 students in CTE courses whereas in 2014-15, they enrolled 9,553 unduplicated students in CTE.

### College Visits

After a decrease in the number of unduplicated student visits to colleges that SCCGP Cohort 2 schools provided, the 2014-15 school year saw an increase in visits. 9,892 students attended college visits with SCCGP Cohort 2 compared to, 7,449 in 2013-14 and 8,581 in 2012-13.



## Conclusion

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Overall, this fourth year of funding proved extremely beneficial for students. SCCGP Cohort 2 not only demonstrated continued growth in impact, but also showed how the program mitigates negative impacts observed throughout the rest of the state, particularly when examining schools serving similar student populations.

- SCCGP Cohort 2 serves a significantly greater percentage of students who qualify for free or reduced lunch (59 percent) as compared to the state average (38 percent). The comparison group mirrored the Cohort's demographics.
- Over the four years of funding, SCCGP Cohort 2 schools lessened the gap in the average graduation rate as compared to the state's, from nearly 8 percentage points to 3. This past year, the state's rate remained the same, while SCCGP Cohort 2 schools' rate increased. Moreover, the comparison group's rate fell demonstrating the significant and unique contribution of SCCGP strategies.
- The first three years of SCCGP funds allowed the schools to reduce their above average dropout rate to the state's average. In this fourth year of funding, the state dropout rate increased 0.1 percentage points. SCCGP Cohort 2 schools were not immune to this trend and experienced a 0.2 percentage point increase. Notably, however, the comparison schools suffered a full percentage point increase, suggesting that without SCCGP, Cohort 2 schools would have fared much worse.
- SCCGP Cohort 2 yielded a highly lucrative return on the state's investment, totaling approximately \$319,842,750 or \$20 saved for every \$1 spent. (This is based on CDE's estimation that each dropout costs \$321,450 per lifetime of that individual, inclusive of taxes lost and spending via other systems, including welfare, incarceration, and healthcare.<sup>xixxiii</sup>)
- SCCGP Cohort 2 schools' have reduced student-to-counselor ratios to well below ASCA's recommended maximum ratio of 250:1 with an overall ratio of 216:1.
- All SCCGP Cohort 2 funded high schools participated in concurrent enrollment resulting in a 74 percent change of student participation over the course of the four years.
- SCCGP Cohort 2 was able to increase their student FAFSA completion rate by on average 2 percentage points over the four years of funding.
- SCCGP Cohort 2 schools increased their matriculation rates by approximately 13 percentage points with the first year of funding and were able to maintain that increase over the next two years.
- SCCGP funds supported more than 6,100 hours of postsecondary workforce readiness professional development, reaching more than 875 school professionals with 7 hours of professional development on average.
- SCCGP Cohort 2 schools continue to consider their school counseling programs to be "partially implemented." Individualized technical assistance on conducting a deep needs assessment to drive programming would be relevant implementation support.



This fourth year of funding shows unequivocally the impact of SCCGP on students' postsecondary success and the critical support the strategies provide in closing the gaps between students living with disadvantaged circumstances and the state average. Notable improvements have been observed and maintained over the four years of funding in the areas of reducing student-to-counselor ratios, increasing graduation rates, reducing dropout rates, increasing participation in concurrent enrollment and increasing FAFSA completions. This held true even in this past year when state averages held constant or even declined.

SCCGP would benefit from focusing improvement strategies on attendance as well as supporting middle schools in developing robust programs that encourage students' school connectedness for early dropout prevention and school engagement. Additional support can be provided by creating opportunities for grantees to share best practices, particularly for grantees to dive deeper into their data to drive programming for specific student populations. Consider trainings on early warning systems and other data dashboard tools, such as an updated version of CDE's DropOut Data Analysis Display (DODAD, [www.cde.state.co.us/dropoutprevention/cgp\\_dodadtool](http://www.cde.state.co.us/dropoutprevention/cgp_dodadtool)).



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## Attachment A: 2014-15 School Counselor Corps Advisory Board

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Dr. Paul Thayer, Colorado State University, Student Retention (Chair)

Tracy Thompson, Colorado Community College System, ICAP Liaison & Retired School Counselor (Vice-Chair)

Andrew Burns, Fort Lewis College, College Admissions

Carl Einhaus, Colorado Department of Higher Education, Student Affairs

Darrell Green, Colorado Association of Career & Technical Education

David West, Aurora Public Schools, Master Counselor Practitioner

Deb Suniga, Arapahoe Community College, TRiO Talent Search

Jennifer Quintana, Adams 50, Middle School Counselor

Lisa Moore, Jefferson County Public Schools, High School Counselor

Rana Tarkenton, Denver Scholarship Foundation

Dr. Rhonda Williams, University of Colorado – Colorado Springs, Counselor Educator





## Attachment B: Data Collection and Analysis Process

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- 1) CDE provided grantee reports at the district and school level. (Grantees with missing reports were contacted for information.) These data were utilized for:
  - Student-to-counselor ratios
  - Grantee implementation indicators
    - Goals
    - Professional development
    - ASCA standards

The reporting system changed for 2012-13 and included the following additional indicators:

- Career and Technical Education
  - College Visits
- 2) Once the final list of SCCGP schools was determined, CDE's Data Services provided aggregate demographic data on free or reduced lunch, ethnicity, and student count by grade level. CDE updated demographic data in addition to mobility data.
  - 3) The Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE) i3 data system and reports were utilized for:
    - FAFSA Completion (U.S. Department of Education verified data)
    - Concurrent Enrollment (SURDS)
    - Postsecondary Matriculation (National Student Clearinghouse & SURDS)

CDHE provided additional data for schools that had too small of numbers to report publicly. In the future, it would be helpful to receive raw data sets (as opposed to reports) for Concurrent Enrollment.

- 4) To determine the comparison group, CDE's Office of Dropout Prevention & Student Engagement provided dropout, graduation, attendance data, and analysis as well as the dropout and free or reduced lunch data from 2008-09 that determined schools' eligibility. (Note: the RFP had 2009-10 data on it despite eligibility being determined from 2008-09 data.) The list of Alternative Education Campuses as well as the School Directory was also provided for additional context, including grade level, name, and school type changes.

The consultant selected the comparison group by examining the following data:

- School type
- Dropout rate
- Free or reduced lunch rate
- Student count
- Alternative Education Campus designation

CDE staff then pulled dropout and free or reduced lunch data for the initial list from 2008-09 through 2011-12 and examined the school directory to eliminate some schools based on changing contexts that made these schools anomalies. The comparison group was finalized after comparing its 2008-09 demographic, school, and dropout data to SCCGP Cohort 2 and the state average. The consultant then analyzed graduation and attendance data for the comparison group, SCCGP Cohort 2, and the state.



## Endnotes

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<sup>i</sup> Center for Labor Market Studies at Northeastern University (October, 2009). The Consequences of Dropping Out of High School. Retrieved on February 15, 2016 from [www.northeastern.edu/clms/wp-content/uploads/The\\_Consequences\\_of\\_Dropping\\_Out\\_of\\_High\\_School.pdf](http://www.northeastern.edu/clms/wp-content/uploads/The_Consequences_of_Dropping_Out_of_High_School.pdf)

<sup>ii</sup> Alliance for Excellent Education. (October, 2009). Potential Economic Impacts of Improved Education on Colorado

<sup>iii</sup> White, S.W., and Kelly, D.F. (2010). The School Counselors Role in School Dropout Prevention. *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 88, 227-235.

<sup>iv</sup> Ibid.

<sup>v</sup> New Horizon High School in Harrison School District 2 and Irving Alternative Education Campus in Colorado Springs School District 11 have closed and, therefore, are not included in this report.

<sup>vi</sup> Center for Labor Market Studies at Northeastern University (October, 2009). The Consequences of Dropping Out of High School. Retrieved on February 15, 2016 from [www.northeastern.edu/clms/wp-content/uploads/The\\_Consequences\\_of\\_Dropping\\_Out\\_of\\_High\\_School.pdf](http://www.northeastern.edu/clms/wp-content/uploads/The_Consequences_of_Dropping_Out_of_High_School.pdf)

<sup>vii</sup> Alliance for Excellent Education. (October, 2009). Potential Economic Impacts of Improved Education on Colorado

<sup>viii</sup> Colorado Department of Higher Education & Colorado Department of Education. (2013). Annual Report on Concurrent Enrollment 2011-12 School Year. Retrieved on May 7, 2013 from

[http://higher.ed.colorado.gov/Publications/Reports/Enrollment/FY2012/2012\\_Concurrent\\_Enrollment\\_Feb\\_2013.pdf](http://higher.ed.colorado.gov/Publications/Reports/Enrollment/FY2012/2012_Concurrent_Enrollment_Feb_2013.pdf)

<sup>ix</sup> U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Education Longitudinal Study of 2002 (ELS: 2002/06).

<sup>x</sup> Burkard, A., Gillen, M., Martinez, M., & Skytte, S. (2011). Wisconsin School Counselors Benefit All Students: The Effect of Fully Implemented Comprehensive School Counseling Programs in Wisconsin High Schools. Retrieved on April 22, 2013 from [www.oakcreek.k12.wi.us/ochs/guidance1/guidance\\_docs/WSCA\\_Research\\_Report\\_2011\\_11.pdf](http://www.oakcreek.k12.wi.us/ochs/guidance1/guidance_docs/WSCA_Research_Report_2011_11.pdf)

<sup>xi</sup> Clemens, E., Carey, J. & Harrington, K. (2010). The School Counseling Program Implementation Survey: Initial Instrument Development and Exploratory Factor Analysis. *ACA: Professional School Counseling*, 14:2, 125-134.

<sup>xii</sup> Center for Labor Market Studies at Northeastern University (October, 2009). The Consequences of Dropping Out of High School. Retrieved on February 15, 2016 from [www.northeastern.edu/clms/wp-content/uploads/The\\_Consequences\\_of\\_Dropping\\_Out\\_of\\_High\\_School.pdf](http://www.northeastern.edu/clms/wp-content/uploads/The_Consequences_of_Dropping_Out_of_High_School.pdf)

<sup>xiii</sup> Alliance for Excellent Education. (October, 2009). Potential Economic Impacts of Improved Education on Colorado